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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 002354

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2014

TAGS: PREL IS GAZA DISENGAGEMENT ISRAELI PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: NATIONAL UNION MK TELLS CODEL DAVIS THAT
DISENGAGEMENT REWARDS TERROR

REF: TEL AVIV 2335

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Knesset member Yuri Shtern of the right-wing coalition National Union party told visiting Congressmen Tom Davis and Jim Moran during their April 15 meeting that Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan is one-sided and rewards terror. Palestinian leadership is corrupt, he continued, and this only serves to reward them for choosing the path of terror over negotiations. According to Shtern, the current intifada is not about settlements or pre-1967 borders but about Palestinian acceptance of the state of Israel. If settlements were the issue, he reasoned, then Palestinian terror attacks should be concentrated directly at them rather than in Israel proper, where most attacks continue to take place.

2. (C) Shtern reaffirmed the commitment of the National Union party to pull out of the governing coalition if the disengagement plan is adopted by the Cabinet. (Note: National Union Chairman and Transportation Minister Avigdor Lieberman told the Ambassador on April 20 that his party would not stay in the coalition if the Cabinet approved Sharon's disengagement plan (reftel). End Note.) Speaking the day after Sharon's meeting with POTUS, Shtern called the plan a risk to Israel's survival and stated that it was a mistake for President Bush to have given his support. In response to Congressman Davis' query whether in Shtern's view there was anything the President could do to rectify the situation, Shtern responded that he must support the unity of Jerusalem under Israeli control and declare unequivocally that there should be no return to pre-1967 borders.

3. (U) Bio Note. Shtern is one of 7 National Union MK's, and is Chairman of the Internal Affairs and Environment Committee. He has a Ph.D. in Economics from Moscow University, where he was a lecturer in Economics from 1971 until his emigration to Israel in 1981.

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KURTZER